

AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS

1. (Previously Presented) A surgical retractor blade for attaching to a drive mechanism, said retractor blade comprising a body having a first end, a second end, a channel adapted to engage one side of an incision in a patient, said first end having a first cavity adapted to receive a support member extending from said drive mechanism, and a second cavity adapted to receive a second support member extending from said drive mechanism.

2. (Original) The surgical retractor blade of claim 1 wherein said channel is adapted to receive and incised sternum.

3. (Original) The surgical retractor blade of claim 1 wherein said first cavity is a blind hole having a predetermined depth from said first end.

4. (Original) The surgical retractor blade of claim 3 wherein said blind hole is substantially cylindrical.

5. (Original) The surgical retractor blade of claim 3 wherein said depth is at least about 1.125 inches long.

6. (Original) The surgical retractor blade of claim 1 wherein said first cavity becomes progressively smaller in a direction away from said first end.

7. (Canceled)

8. (Currently Amended) A surgical retractor blade, said retractor blade comprising an engineering polymer body having a first end adapted to attach to a separate, complete driving mechanism, said first end having a first cavity extending substantially along a direction of a longitudinal axis of said blade and adapted to receive a support member extending from said drive mechanism, a second end, a channel adapted to engage one side of an incision in a patient, and a rail extending along at least a portion of said polymeric body.

9. (Previously Presented) A detachable surgical retractor blade for attaching to a drive mechanism, said retractor blade comprising a body having a first end, a second end, a channel adapted to engage one side of an incision in a patient, and a rail extending along at least a portion of said body, wherein said rail has a top portion and a bottom portion, said bottom portion having a narrowed region adjacent said top portion forming first and second tabs on said top portion; and wherein said retractor blade is detachable from the drive mechanism even when said retractor blade is applying force through said channel to one side of the incision..

10. (Original) The surgical retractor blade of claim 8, further comprising a plurality of open slots for receiving a suture therein.

11. (Previously Presented) A surgical retractor blade, said retractor blade comprising a body having a first end adapted to attach to a separate, complete driving mechanism, a second end, a channel adapted to engage one side of an incision in a patient, a rail extending along at least a portion of said body, and a plurality of open slots for receiving a suture therein, wherein said open slots have an internal wall and a suture locking member having a fixed end and a free end, said free end engaging said internal wall so as to clamp a suture placed between said free end and said internal wall.

12. (Original) The surgical retractor blade of claim 11 wherein said suture locking member is substantially rigid and pivots about said fixed end.

13. (Original) The surgical retractor blade of claim 12 further comprising a spring member biased against said suture locking member to forcibly urge said free end towards said internal wall.

14. (Previously Presented) A surgical retractor blade for attaching to a drive mechanism, said retractor blade comprising a body having a first end, a second end, a channel adapted to engage one side of an incision in a patient, a rail extending along at least a portion of said body, and a plurality of open slots for receiving a suture therein, wherein at least one of said open slots have a first slot section which bifurcates into a second slot section and a third slot section.

15. (Previously Presented) The surgical retractor blade of claim 14, wherein each of said second and third slot sections have an internal wall and a suture locking member having a fixed end and a free

end, said free end engaging said internal wall so as to clamp a suture placed between said free end and said internal wall.

16. (Canceled)

17. (Previously Presented) A surgical retractor blade for attaching to a drive mechanism, said retractor blade comprising a body having a first end, a second end, a channel adapted to engage one side of an incision in a patient, and a rail extending along at least a portion of said body, wherein said first end has a cavity adapted to receive a support member extending from said drive mechanism.

18. (Original) The surgical retractor blade of claim 17 wherein said cavity is a tapered hole.

19. (Original) The surgical retractor blade of claim 18 further comprising a flexible polymeric flap adapted to flexibly engage soft tissue surrounding said incision.

20. (Previously Presented) The surgical retractor blade of claim 1, wherein said body comprises a polymer.

21. (Canceled) Please cancel claim 21..

22. (Previously Presented) The surgical retractor of claim 9, wherein said body comprises a polymer.

23. (Previously Presented) The surgical retractor blade of claim 11, wherein said body comprises a polymer.

24. (Previously Presented) The surgical retractor blade of claim 14, wherein said body comprises a polymer.

25. (Previously Presented) The surgical retractor blade of claim 17, wherein said body comprises a polymer.

26 (Previously Presented) A surgical retractor blade for attaching to a drive mechanism, said retractor blade comprising a body having a first end, a second end, a channel adapted to engage one side of an incision in a patient, a rail extending along at least a portion of said body, and a plurality of open slots for receiving a suture therein, wherein said open slots have an internal wall and a suture locking member having a fixed end and a free end, said free end engaging said internal wall so as to clamp a suture placed between said free end and said internal wall, wherein said suture locking member is substantially rigid and pivots about said fixed end.

27. (Previously Presented) The surgical retractor of claim 26, further comprising a spring member biased against said suture locking member to forcibly urge said free end towards said internal wall.

28. (Previously Presented) A detachable surgical retractor blade for attaching to a drive mechanism, said retractor blade comprising a body having a first end, a second end, and a channel adapted to engage one side of an incision in a patient, wherein said retractor blade is detachable from the drive mechanism even when said retractor blade is applying force through said channel to one side of the incision..

29. (New) The surgical retractor of claim 28, wherein said body comprises a polymer.

30. (Currently Amended) A sternal retractor blade, said retractor blade comprising a body having a first end adapted to attach to a separate, sternal retractor driving mechanism, a second end, and a channel adapted to engage one side of an incision in a patient, wherein said body comprises engineering polymer, and said body includes at least one opening formed in said first end for receiving a reinforcing member.

31. (Currently Amended) The sternal retractor of blade of claim 30, wherein said ~~body includes at least one opening for receiving a reinforcing member to strengthen said body under loads incurred during sternal retraction~~ extends from said drive mechanism..